NO. 28
JUL 1991
$1.50 US
$1.85 CAN
80p UK

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

IN WHICH WE BID FAREWELL TO ABSENT FRIENDS, LOST LOVES, OLD GODS, AND THE SEASON OF MISTS; AND IN WHICH WE GIVE THE DEVIL HIS DUE.

the SANDMAN™

SEASON OF MISTS 7

gaiman dringenberg pratt

Hell:

They are coming back.

Don't you want to look at them? They are your responsibility too, Duma. No?

It's too late to look away.

There must be millions of them.

It is strange, Duma: you would think they would be pleased to be back. This is their home, after all. But no.

Each of them walks as if they carry the weight of a thousand worlds on their shoulders. But happy or sad, it matters not...

They're coming back.

CONVERSION BY WILDSTORM

And once the demons are here, the damned will also return. The tortured must have their torturers, after all. Soon the chimneys will smoke, and the ditches will run with blood and offal and tears.

Soon it will be difficult to tell that anything has changed, here in Hell.

The Dreaming:

But it has, Duma. You cannot turn your back on that.

Why do you not speak? Eh?

You are no longer the Angel of Silence. Even now another stands in your place in the Silver City...

Well? Say something.

No?

Ah me. I don't suppose it matters whether you look or no. You are down here, friend, until the end of time; and so am I.

Rulers of Hell, answerable only to our creator.

For good or ill...

...it's just the two of us.

Season of Mists
Epilogue

In which we bid farewell to absent friends, lost loves, old gods, and the season of mists; and in which we give the devil his due.

NEIL GAIMAN Writer
MIKE DRINGENBERG Penciller
GEORGE PRATT Inker
DANIEL VOZZO Colorist
TODD KLEIN Letterer
ALISA KWITNEY Asst. Ed.
KAREN BERGER Editor

Sandman characters created by Gaiman, Kieth & Dringenberg.

Hello, Nada.

KAI'CKUL DREAMLORD...

HELLO.

Please--be seated.

THANK YOU

Are you...? I mean, I suppose you must be hungry.

I WAS VERY HUNGRY FOR THE FIRST FEW THOUSAND YEARS. BUT AFTER THAT I GREW USED TO THE HUNGER, AND IT CEASED TO CONCERN ME AS IT ONCE DID.

I HAVE NO TRUE BODY ANY MORE, AFTER ALL. I AM ONE OF THE DEAD.

I had wonde--

IF YOU EVER--

I'm sorry. You were going to say?

NO. YOU FIRST, KAI'CKUL. I THINK YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO ME.

Nada.

Ten thousand years ago, I... I condemned you to Hell. I now think... I think I might have acted wrongly.

I think perhaps I should apologize.

I should tell you that I am sorry.

YOU THINK YOU *MAY* HAVE ACTED WRONGLY? YOU THINK *PERHAPS* YOU'LL APOLOGIZE?

YOU *THINK*?

AND *NOW* WHAT?

YOU EXPECT ME TO ACCEPT THAT, AND SAY NO MORE? ONE HALF-HEARTED APOLOGY, AND YOU'VE SOME-HOW KISSED IT ALL BETTER?

I SPENT TEN THOUSAND *YEARS* IN HELL. I COULD SCARCELY STAND IN THAT OUBLIETTE. I BURNED BY DAY, AND FROZE BY NIGHT. GLASS SHARDS CUT MY FLESH. I STARVED, AND HURT, AND WEPT, AND WAITED.

ALL THAT BECAUSE OF YOU.

AND YOU "THINK PERHAPS YOU SHOULD APOLOGIZE"?

YOU...

YOU...

YOU MAKE ME *SICK*.

You hit me, Nada.

You struck me. No one may strike me; and here--here at the heart of the dreaming...

I should... I... I ought to...

YES?

WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ME, DREAMLORD? SEND ME BACK TO HELL?

No.

I... I am sorry, Nada.

You are right. What I did was foolish, and heartless, and...and unfair; you hurt my pride, and I hurt you. I was wrong.

There is nothing else I can say.

VERY WELL. I ACCEPT YOUR APOLOGY.

I SAID *NO* TO *THAT* OFFER TEN THOUSAND YEARS BACK, DREAM. I HAVE NOT CHANGED MY MIND.

If you wish, Nada... you could stay here with me. Be my queen.

BUT *YOU* COULD GIVE ALL *THIS* UP, YOU KNOW.

You suggested that once before, Nada. My answer has not changed. I have my responsibilities. I cannot abandon them.

SO YOU SAID, A *VERY* LONG TIME AGO.

Well, old love.

If you will not stay with me--and I, obviously, will not go with you--then perhaps it is time for us to discuss your future...

Lord Susano-o-no-Mikoto. Would you leave my palace without saying goodbye?

You surprise me.

I...I HAVE BEEN SUMMONED BACK TO THE FLOATING BRIDGE OF HEAVEN...I REGRET HAVING TO LEAVE SO SUDDENLY...

I WAS UNWORTHY OF YOUR HOSPITALITY, DREAMWEAVER. BUT I HUMBLY THANK YOU, NONETHELESS.

Unworthy of my hospitality?

Yes. Yes, I think perhaps you were.

HOW DARE YOU, DREAMWEAVER? HOW DARE YOU MALIGN MY HONOR AS A DEITY OF THE FLOATING KINGDOM...?

I dare because you are no more a Deity of the Floating Kingdom than I am.

Are you... Loki?

YOU GUESSED.

Perhaps if I had realized sooner it might have saved one of my guests some inconvenience.

Poor Susano-o-no-Mikoto...

Why him, Loki?

BECAUSE HE WAS STANDING NEXT TO ME, WHILE EVERY-ONE WAS WATCHING YOU AND AZAZEL. AND BECAUSE I DON'T *LIKE* STORM-GODS.

I DON'T KNOW WHY NOT. I JUST DON'T. THEY RUB ME THE WRONG WAY.

WHY THE HELL *SHOULDN'T* HE REPLACE ME UNDER THE EARTH?

Because he was my guest also, Loki.

WELL? SO AM I! AND YOU'RE GOING TO SEND *ME* BACK TO TORTURE AND PAIN, UNTIL THE END OF MY WORLD?

...I cannot permit Lord Susano to remain beneath the world, in your place. He should not suffer for you.

I will free Susano, Loki.

I could return you to the pain, and the snake, and the dark.

NO. PLEASE. NO.

SO?

Hmm. I could create a dream image of you, and leave it in his place in the cavern beneath the Earth. Both of you could walk free.

No one else would need ever know.

I am able to do this thing.

WOULD YOU DO THAT? *PLEASE?*

If I were to do this thing, Loki, you would be in my debt. You understand this?

I UNDERSTAND.

Very well, Loki. Let us talk...

...AT MY AGE, GETTING TIRED OF ONE-NIGHT STANDS. I MEAN, THERE HE IS, BACK IN EGYPT, I DOUBT HE'LL GIVE ME A SECOND THOUGHT.

WHILE I'LL BE IN DAMP OLD FAERIE WITH NO ONE TO TALK TO BUT SIMPLEMINDED GIANTS AND GARRULOUS TOADSTOOLS...

I WONDER IF HE'LL WRITE TO ME...

COULD YOU READ IT, IF HE DID?

MMM, DEAREST CLURACAN, FALCON, SQUIGGLY LINE, EYE, LITTLE-MAN-HOLDING-A-FLAIL, JUG, SQUIGGLE, BEETLE... I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN.

WHERE IS HE?

I'm sorry if I have kept you waiting.

AYE. WE MUST RETURN TO OUR OWN LAND, AT THIS TIME, MORPHEUS. AND FROM MYSELF AND MY BROTHER, OUR THANKS FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY.

AH, SISTER, DID I NOT TELL YOU?

DIDN'T YOU TELL ME WHAT?

I SUPPOSE IT MUST HAVE SLIPPED MY MIND.

EXCUSE US FOR ONE MOMENT, LORD SHAPER.

Of course.

CLURACAN, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

NUALA-- I THOUGHT YOU KNEW.

NO YOU DIDN'T. YOU'RE JUST COVERING UP FOR YOURSELF. YOU CAN NEVER JUST COME OUT AND SAY SOMETHING. WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE UNSEELY COURT IS THE MATTER?

YOU AREN'T COMING BACK WITH ME.

WHAT?

MY LORD SHAPER, I WILL BE RETURNING TO FAERIE *ALONE*. MY SISTER, NUALA, WAS A *GIFT* TO YOU, FROM FAERIE. MY QUEEN DOES *NOT* EXPECT HER GIFTS TO BE REJECTED.

WHAT?

WHAT?

I MUST *THANK* YOU FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY, MY LORD. I WILL CONVEY YOUR BEST WISHES AND THANKS FOR OUR GIFT TO HER MAJESTY.

CLURACAN--SHE *CAN'T* DO THIS. *YOU* CAN'T DO THIS. HE *DIDN'T* GIVE US HELL... YOU *SAID*, YOU *TOLD* ME, THIS WOULD JUST BE *TEMPORARY*, ACT *NICE* YOU SAID, *SMILE*...

PERHAPS TITANIA WILL ALLOW YOU BACK FROM TIME TO TIME, TO SEE OLD FRIENDS. AND VISIT YOUR BROTHER.

If the lady does not wish to stay...

AH, BUT SHE HAS NO *CHOICE* IN THE MATTER, LORD SHAPER. NUALA'S ALL YOURS. A GIFT YOU HAVE ACCEPTED.

REJECT TITANIA'S GIFT, IF YOU WILL. BUT THE QUEEN WILL *NOT* BE BEST PLEASED-- AND NUALA *HERSELF* WILL RISK HER SEVEREST DISPLEASURE.

Hmph.

Very well. Then she may stay. I will find living quarters for her, somewhere out of the way.

However, if you are to remain here, Nuala, you must remove the glamour you wear. I mislike little magics in this realm.

BUT...

There.

IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE SEEN YOUR NATURAL FACE, MY SISTER, I HAD ALMOST FORGOTTEN WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE...

THERE *THERE*, LASS, DON'T CRY...

KAI'CKUL? I AM READY.

I'VE CHOSEN THE SECOND OF THE CHOICES YOU GAVE ME. IT SEEMS... EASIEST, SOMEHOW.

NOW, Nada? Will you not wait?

NO.

I'M NOT AFRAID, MY LOVE. ISN'T THAT *STRANGE*? I THOUGHT I'D BE AFRAID, AND I'M *NOT*...

WHAT DO I DO?

Just take my hand, Nada.

I SPENT TEN THOUSAND YEARS IN HELL, KAI'CKUL. I BLAMED *YOU* FOR MY PAIN...

COULD I HAVE *LEFT*? COULD I HAVE WALKED *AWAY* FROM THAT?

Perhaps.

WILL YOU REMEMBER ME, DO YOU THINK?

I will always care for you, Nada.

BUT WILL I *KNOW* THAT, KAI'CKUL DREAMLORD? WILL I STILL REMEMBER THAT YOU CARE?

No. But I shall know, Nada.

I shall know.

Hong Kong :

And I will not forget you, Nada.

Live a good life.

You will always be welcome in the Dreaming, whatsoever body you wear...

Fare well.

Perth, Western Australia:

Y'KNOW, I'VE SEEN YOU BEFORE, MATE. DOWN ON THE BEACH. SLEEPING *ROUGH*, ARE WE?

I SUPPOSE THAT WE ARE.

THERE ARE *WORSE* PLACES.

IT CAN GETS A A BIT WARM IN THE DAYTIME, BUT CRACK A TUBE, OR GO FOR A DIP, AND YOU'RE RIGHT AS RAIN.

I DON'T COME DOWN HERE MUCH IN THE DAY, ME.

BEACHES ARE FOR THE *YOUNGSTERS*, IN THE DAYTIME. Y'KNOW, STARIN' AT ALL THE YOUNG SHEILAS WITH NOTHING TO COVER THEIR NEVER-YOU-MINDS.

I'LL TELL YOU *THIS* FOR FREE, ANY KID WHO TRIED BATHING TOPLESS 'ROUND HERE TWENTY *YEARS* AGO, WELL, *WE'D'VE* SAID SHE WAS NO *BETTER* THAN SHE SHOULD BE.

REALLY.

DO GO ON.

I COME DOWN HERE MOST EVENINGS. TO WATCH THE SUNSET. IT'S A *BEAUT* TONIGHT, ISN'T IT?

YES. I SUPPOSE THAT IT IS.

YOU YOUNG FELLERS, YOU HAVEN'T A BLOODY *CLUE*...

I USED TO COME DOWN HERE WITH THE WIFE, AND THE TWINS.

DARREN GOT HIMSELF KILLED IN VIETNAM. *SEAN* AND ME BOTH GOT A BIT THE WORSE FOR WEAR WHEN WE HEARD THE NEWS.

HE CRASHED THE CAR, BUT ONLY *I* CRAWLED AWAY.

AND, WHEN I GOT OUT OF THE HOSPITAL, ME AND THE WIFE CARRIED ON WALKING DOWN HERE. THEN *SHE* GOT A LUMP IN HER BREAST...

ANYWAY...

NOW IT'S JUST *ME*.

AND I *STILL* COME DOWN HERE TO WATCH THE SUN SET.

Y'KNOW, MOST EVERY NIGHT IT'S A BLOODY *BEAUT*. AND EVERY NIGHT IT'S *DIFFERENT*.

AND I THINK, WELL, I'VE HAD A *SHIT* OF A LIFE, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. IT WASN'T *FAIR*. EVERYONE I'VE EVER LOVED IS *DEAD*, AND MY *LEG* HURTS ALL THE BLOODY TIME...

BUT I THINK, *ANY* GOD THAT CAN *DO* SUNSETS LIKE THAT, A DIFFERENT ONE EVERY NIGHT...

'STREWTH, WELL, YOU'VE GOT TO *RESPECT* THE OLD BASTARD, HAVEN'T YOU?

RIGHT.

IF YOU'RE STILL HERE TOMORROW NIGHT, I'LL SEE YOU THEN.

I MAY BE HERE.

YOU'RE A *POM*, AREN'T YOU? THAT'S OKAY. I'VE KNOWN SOME GOOD POMS.

SEEYA, MATE.

ALL RIGHT. I ADMIT IT. HE'S GOT A POINT.

THE SUNSETS ARE BLOODY *MARVELOUS*, YOU OLD BASTARD.

SATISFIED?

Hell:

"This is Hell. Smell the reek of burning fat in the air. Listen to the screams and the whimpers and the moans. Feel the pain...

"I never imagined it would be like this. Our realm of reflection. Our realm of shadow. Our little realm of pain...

"And we are kings. Or queens.

"Or... angels."

And what are you thinking? Eh, Duma? Are you contemplating our new domain, as once you contemplated the meaning of silence, or the perfection of the name?

I am only here because of you...

But perhaps it's a blessing. Perhaps it's an opportunity to do good. Has that occurred to you?

In this place every tiny act of goodness, of self-sacrifice, or love, is magnified, and becomes ...important.

There is so much that we can do for them.

So much...

NO... PLEASE NO...

YESS. BAD BOY. TAKE HIS MEDICINE. LIKE A MANN.

FLAY THE SKIN FROM HIS CHESST, LISTEN TO HIMM SQUEAK...

SQUEAK, LITTLE MOUSEY. SQUEAK TO THE HEAVENNS...

No.

That was the old Hell. That was a place of mindless torture and purposeless pain.

There will be no more wanton violence; no further suffering, inflicted without reason or explanation.

We will hurt you. And we are not sorry.

But we do not do it to punish you. We do it to redeem you.

Because afterward, you'll be a better person...

And because we love you.

One day, you'll thank us for it.

BUT... YOU *DON'T* UNDERSTAND...

THAT MAKES IT *WORSE*.

THAT MAKES IT SO MUCH WORSE...

AND THE ANGEL REMIEL ASCENDS INTO THE SKY OF THE UNDERWORLD, CONFIDENT THAT IT HAS BEGUN TO CHANGE THINGS. TO SUBSTITUTE REDEMPTION FOR DAMNATION, CORRECTION FOR DESPAIR...

BIT BY BIT, A LITTLE AT A TIME. THE BILLIONS OF SOULS, THE MILLIONS OF DEMONS...

THE FLAMES OF HELL, REMIEL MUSES, HAVE BECOME REFINING FIRES, BURNING AWAY THE DROSS, LEAVING PURITY AND REPENTANCE AND GOOD.

REMIEL HEARS THE SCREAMS, AND IT SMILES.

PERHAPS, IT THINKS, IT JUDGED TOO HASTILY.

AFTER ALL, THIS IS PART OF THE PLAN, IS IT NOT? THEN HOW COULD IT *NOT* BE FOR THE BEST, IN THIS, THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS...

PERHAPS EVENTS HAVE ENDED HAPPILY, AFTER ALL.

HAPPILY.

EVER AFTER.

IN HELL.

The flames of Hell, Remiel mused, had become refining fires, burning away the dross and sin, leaving only purity and repentance and good. Remiel heard the screams, and it smiled. Perhaps (it thought) it had been guilty of misjudgment.

After all, this was all part of the plan, was it not? How could events not be for the best, in this, the best of all possible worlds? Perhaps things had ended happily, after all.

Happily ever after, in Hell.

October knew, of course, that the action of turning a page, of ending a chapter or of shutting a book, did not end a tale.

Having admitted that, he would also avow that happy endings were never difficult to find: "It is simply a matter," he explained to April, "of finding a sunny place in a garden, where the light is golden and the grass is soft; somewhere to rest, to stop reading, and to be content."

--from The Man Who Was October by G. K. Chesterton / Library of Dreams

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
#1 BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

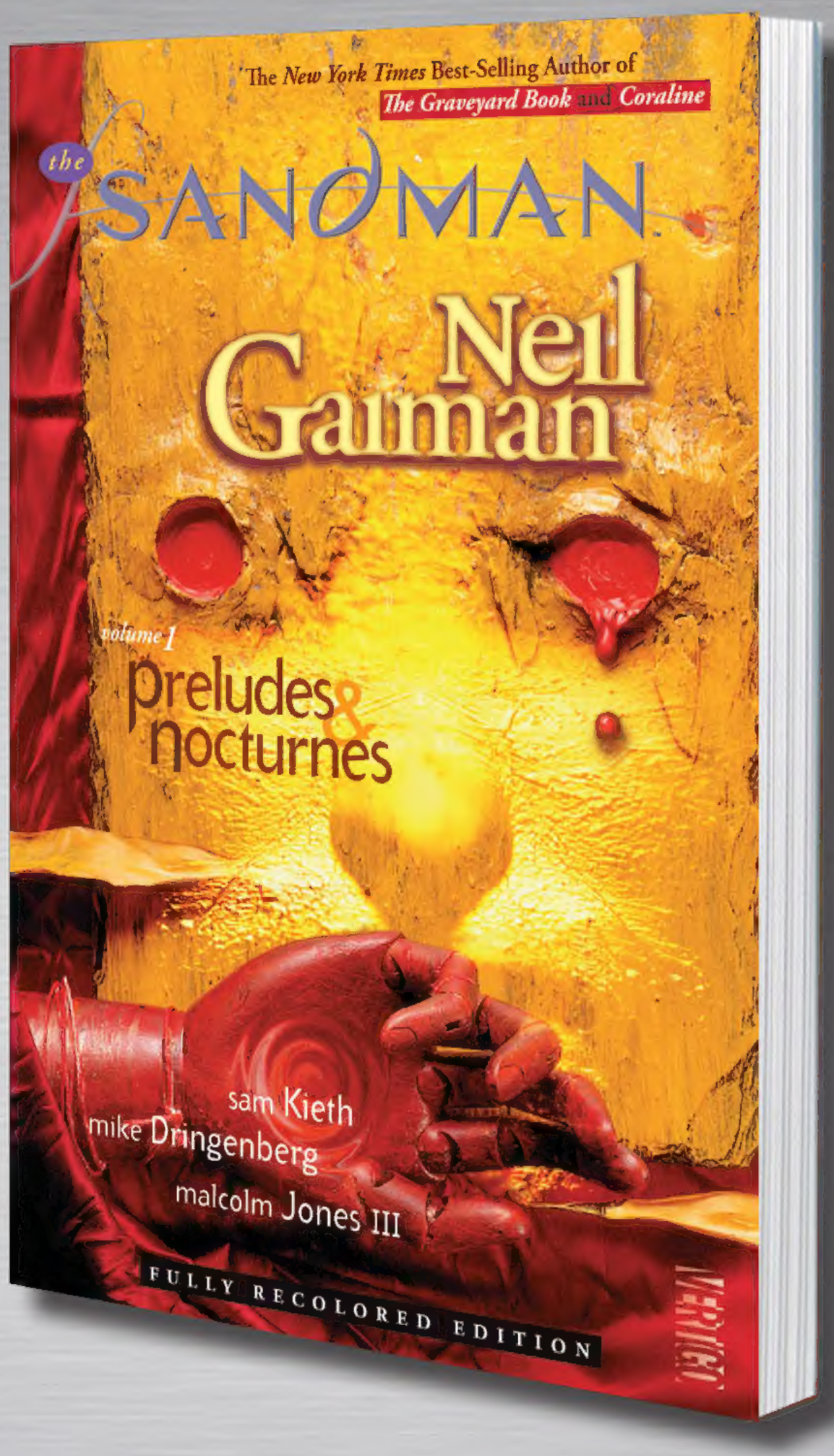
NEIL GAIMAN

"What Gaiman has written is a comics masterpiece."
– PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

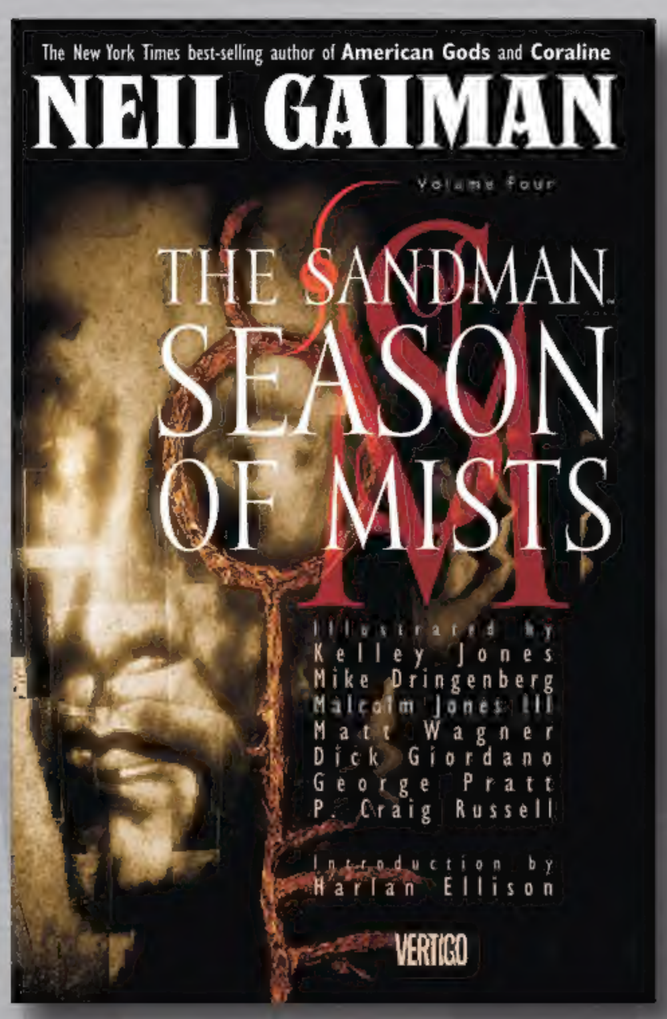
"SANDMAN just might be the smartest comic book ever written."
– USA TODAY

"The landmark comic-book series that actually made death seem cool."
– ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

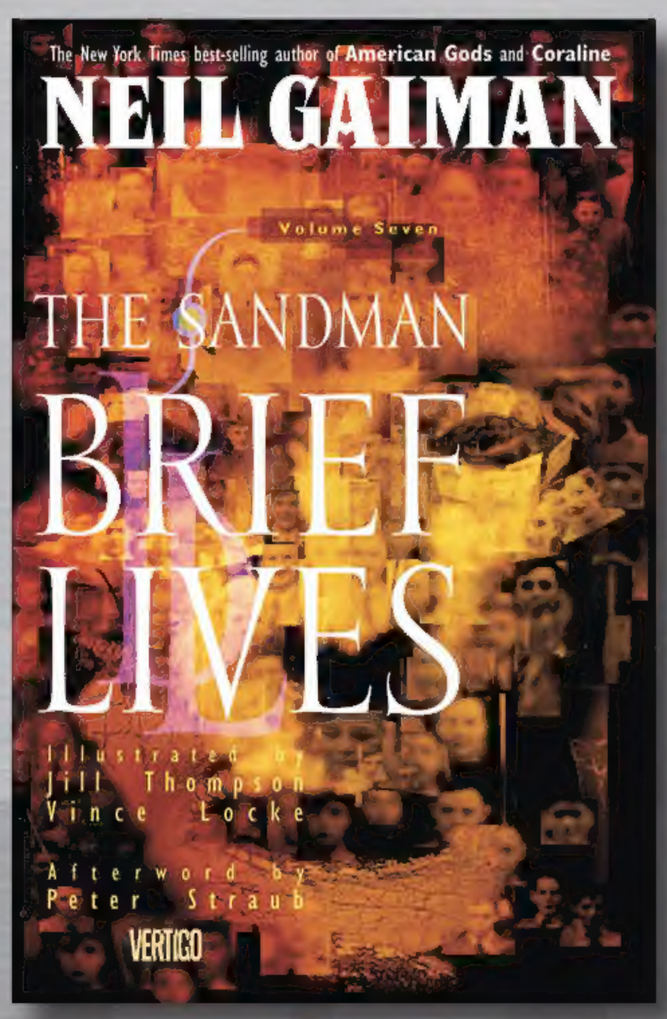
"This is the stuff dreams are made of."
– IGN.com



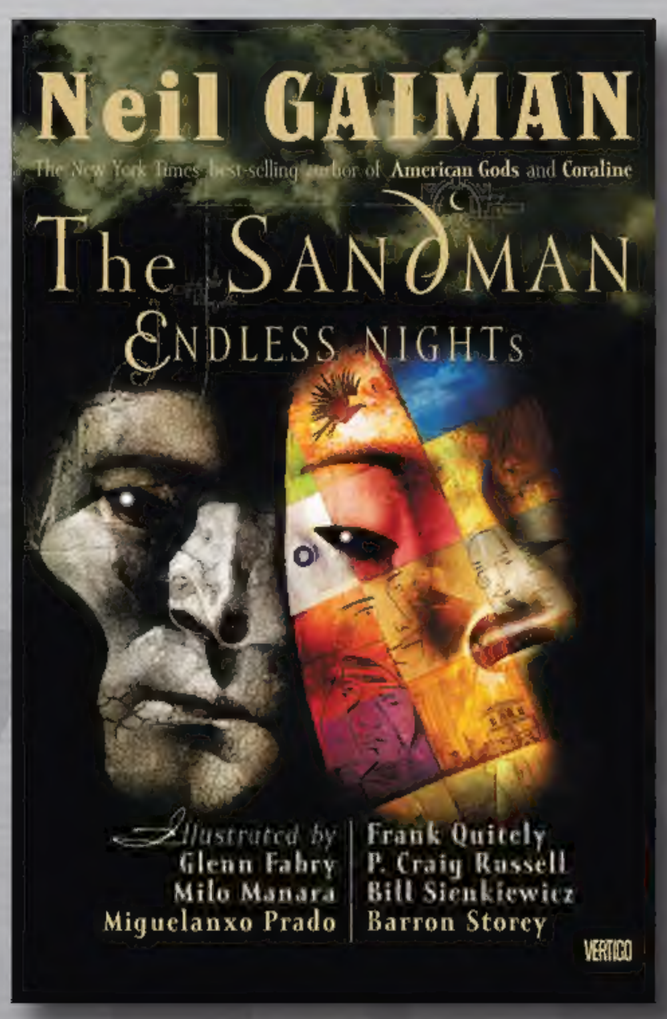
THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
SEASON OF MISTS



THE SANDMAN VOL. 7:
BRIEF LIVES



THE SANDMAN:
ENDLESS NIGHTS



Use the **BUY IN PRINT** feature to find a comics shop near you.
Check back here every week for **NEW DIGITAL RELEASES**!

Suggested for Mature Readers

E
E
M
P
I
R
SON OF ULTRON